



Emergency Management

UPDATE

August 2000

Forum seeks stronger EM-EMS ties

By Bob Lambert, VDEM Reservist

Though it's been nearly a decade since Baptist Hospital of Miami fell victim to the fury of Hurricane Andrew, Thomas Tulloch vividly remembers the ensuing chaos as the overworked staff tended to large numbers of injury victims with limited medical supplies and no immediate access to the outside world.

The hospital's vice president of facilities management joined other public- and private-sector speakers at a recent two-day workshop on health care emergency preparedness to stress the importance of stronger ties between the emergency management and emergency medical services communities.

Natural disasters such as Hurricane Andrew ('92) and, more recently, Hurricane Floyd ('99) can place extraordinary demands on medical resources. Terrorist incidents like the Oklahoma City bombing ('95) add elements of uncertainty and danger to the response. Both can stretch these services to the limit and beyond.

VDEM joined the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation, The Reciprocal Group, Virginia Hospital Shared Services Corporation and the Virginia Department of Health in cosponsoring the workshop to promote awareness and dialogue.

"A terrorist attack or a major accident could really overwhelm the existing hospital infrastructure," says George Roarty, VDEM chemical emergency preparedness branch manager. "Even under the best conditions, it would be a stretch for the available assets."

Roarty, who helped organize the forum, says local coordinators have historically assumed that hospitals have the capacity to manage a large-scale emergency.

"There is no question local public safety officials assume that hospitals are prepared for a major disaster or emergency," says



Critical diagnosis. VDEM Deputy State Coordinator George Foresman directs questions from the floor to the five-member panel on health care emergency preparedness. (Photo by Bob Lambert)

Chesterfield County Emergency Services Coordinator Lynda F. Price. "I know, having worked in the hospital arena for many years, that they are not. Even a small incident can overwhelm these facilities."

Both Roarty and Price agree that allocation of resources is a major problem. If you had 500 casualties, you wouldn't have enough ambulances and hospital beds, Price says. Hospitals may have only one decontamination unit, far short of what would be necessary to provide medical attention to hundreds or thousands of victims, Roarty adds.

Participants agree the outlook could be improved by stockpiling portable decontamination units and medical equipment/supplies and developing a staffing network to be deployed as needed. Yet, the cost of total readiness would be prohibitive.

"The problem in disaster planning is that the probability of such an incident occurring is so slight in the overall mix of things that it may not seem like a good allocation of funds," Price says.

There are many steps local emergency managers can take to facilitate this process. Steve Ennis of The Reciprocal Group, which represents health insurers, offers these tips:

- Call your local hospitals' top management to initiate dialogue
- Establish a cooperative atmosphere (Emphasize that you're ready to work with them to improve the overall response plan.)

(continued on page 4)

What three Web sites are essential elements of this man's EM Toolkit?



Virginia Beach Emergency Manager Mark Marchbank is on the vanguard of the state's hurricane preparedness efforts and a member of our Web site advisory committee. Visit the VDEM Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate to learn more about him in the first of our monthly local EM profiles.

Partnering provides tools for expo success

By Rohn Brown, VDEM Public Affairs

Designing a successful community education program requires the right ingredients. You need a corporate partner, regional cooperation and a timely message, to name a few.

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety found the right mix when they planned the Severe Weather Expo on May 20 at the Williamsburg area Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse in York County.

"Lowe's provided an excellent opportunity for James City County, York County and the city of Williamsburg, along with other partners such as the American Red Cross, to stress the importance of individual disaster preparedness," said Steve Kopczynski, York County Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator.

"By having the expo at a home improvement store, we not only showcased the equipment and supplies needed for a disaster, but showed customers how to use them."

Preparedness supplies (including items typically found in a disaster kit) were designated with special severe weather logo signs throughout the store. Company representatives were on hand to show how to use chain saws and generators.

They also demonstrated how to install hurricane clips as part of the "Hurricane House" demonstration.



Prepped for success. York County Fire Chief and EM Coordinator Steve Kopczynski and Lowe's Assistant Store Manager Jeff Scott display a few of the NOAA weather radios given to Lowe's customers. (Photo by Jim Dishner)

In addition, Lowe's promoted use of NOAA weather radios to the more than 2,000 customers they estimate visited the store that day.

Every customer who came into the store between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. received a ticket and a chance to win a free weather radio. Lowe's also gave 30 radios to daycare centers in the three localities.

"The weather radio giveaway was Lowes' idea," said Kopczynski. "From the beginning, they actively participated in developing and planning the entire expo."

"They made all the resources available, from the generator company vendor to the weather radios. It was really nice working with the Lowe's staff."

"As part of the Lowe's Home Safety Council, each store is committed to

helping the community," said Jeff Scott, Assistant Store Manager. "It is our philosophy that the employees and the shoppers are part of the community."

"When we were planning the expo, we discussed who might need the weather radios. The localities told us that the daycare centers were one of the target groups left out in the past."

Lowe's promoted the expo with a full-page ad in their weekly sales flyer and banners in the store. They also sent out a press release and arranged for free radio advertising spots.

For more information about this event, contact Judi Riutort, York County Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, at jriutort@co.york.va.us or (757) 890-4960.

Visit www.lowes.com/lowes/index.asp or the Lowe's 2000 Web site at www.gopbi.com/weather/storm to learn about Lowe's disaster preparedness and home safety programs.

Only two expos to go in 2000!

- Aug. 5 — Patrick Henry Mall
Newport News
- Sept. 8-9 — Chesapeake Square Mall
Chesapeake

Visit the Hampton Roads Emergency Management Committee Web site at www.hremc.org for more information on these events.

Plan now for joint public awareness initiatives

Now is the time to mark your calendar for two upcoming state-wide awareness campaigns:

- ✍ Winter Preparedness Week
(Nov. 12-18, 2000)
- ✍ Tornado Preparedness Day
(March 27, 2001)

These dates may seem miles away but are really just around the corner when you consider the lead time required for coordinating these efforts in your community.

Each year, VDEM partners with the National Weather Service to produce a variety of educational materials that can be easily customized for local use. Yet, the collaboration doesn't stop there.

The true success of these initiatives comes from your local efforts to use the information to open doors for disaster education. Based on last year's response, Tornado Preparedness Day is one of the most popular awareness programs as schools, businesses and industry are encouraged to participate in the statewide tornado drill.

School may be out for the summer, but planning is well under way for the coming year. It's not too early to coordinate drill participation with principals or administrators in your area.

There are many other excellent opportunities to work with public- and private-



Tornado Drill 2000. Hanover County's Rural Point Elementary School puts safety first.

sector organizations to raise awareness about these hazards. Public Affairs Coordinator Rohn Brown can assist you in jump-starting or reenergizing these programs and can be reached at rbrown@vdem.state.va.us or (804) 897-6500, ext. 6519.

Drills test teams' terrorism readiness

By Brett A. Burdick (PG, CHMM), Terrorism Program Manager

This spring, Virginia's regional hazardous materials response teams proved their ability to respond to Weapons of Mass Destruction events was up to par with a little green from VDEM.

Using \$91,000 in FEMA grant funds as pass-through money, VDEM provided each of the 13 teams with \$7,000 subgrants to offset costs of drills testing local response capabilities.

This marks one of the first times that local governments throughout the state have received direct monetary support to assist in terrorism preparedness.

Conducted in May and June, the exercises dealt with smaller-scale (more probable) events such as encountering a Ricin production laboratory, terrorist use of a toxic industrial chemical, and delivery of WMD via trucks and cars. Though it is important for Virginia to be able to deal with the larger, less-likely terrorism scenarios, the drills provided a first step in the assessment process.

Most exercises also involved coordination with local fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services and emergency management officials. Some teams opted to bring in other state and federal agencies to add to the realism.

In every case, the scenarios offered the significant collateral benefit of allowing all public safety departments and agencies to work together in the field.

Virginia has been involved in terrorism preparedness since the mid-1990s and has focused its attention on the first responder community to ensure the consequences of terrorism can be managed. Any of the scenarios employed in these drills could happen in Virginia today, tomorrow or the next day, and it is essential that our teams have the capabilities to respond to them.

Though lessons learned are still being compiled, it is clear that Virginia's hazmat teams can work safely, effectively and efficiently in a terrorist environment.

VDEM expects to receive additional FEMA funding to continue local terrorism preparedness drills and will use these results in developing future training, exercise and planning activities. Contact Brett Burdick at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6569, to learn more.

And now for the good news ...

Normal precipitation over most of Virginia during the first half of 2000 has broken persistent drought that severely afflicted the western portions of the state, according to the state Drought Monitoring Task Force.

State Climatologist Pat Michaels says the jet stream that was locked into a drought-producing pattern last year is on the move, bringing rain-bearing clouds and making Virginia "as green as a craps table when you see it from the air." Russell and Tazewell counties, however, are still trucking in drinking water for isolated mountainous areas lacking adequate public water supplies.

Pope to put Virginians onto higher ground



VDEM welcomes Michelle B. Pope, who returns home to Virginia to bring new strength to the Preparedness and Mitigation Division as a hazard mitigation planner.

Formerly an all-hazards planner for the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the Chesterfield County native helped develop evacuation plans for the hurricane-prone areas of the state. Her primary concern there was storm surges in a state with little elevation.

Now, she will also be thinking vertically as she looks into both the surge-prone areas of the Virginia coast and steep valleys of the state where flash flooding is common. Her duties will include allocating funding to help individuals in these areas move out of harm's way permanently.

Pope holds a bachelor's degree in meteorology from Florida State University and plans to get her certification in emergency management.

Roanoke Valley takes prevention to the Bank(s)

In the Roanoke Valley, Project Impact is banking on the ability of a red-spotted salamander to teach children and adults about flood safety.

"Banks McGill" made his debut earlier this year to emphasize the dangers of floodwaters to the citizens of the program's four jurisdictions of Roanoke City, Roanoke County, the city of Salem and the town of Vinton.

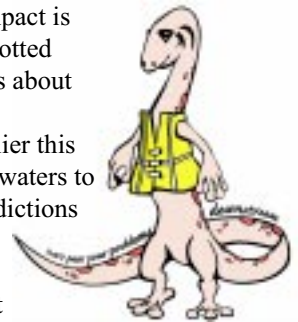
Now, the new stormwater management mascot is ready to take to the road to bring his entertaining approach to preparedness to your community.

"We considered a dozen different ideas and market tested the three best ones on over 300 children," says Roanoke Valley Project Impact Coordinator Maureen Castern.

Castern says an interactive Banks CD will be available this month to teach children (and adults) about stormwater issues. It includes basic information along with coloring pages and science projects. The program will prompt kids to enter their grade level and adjust the difficulty to correspond with three levels of content.

"We feel it is important to share our materials with other communities as much as possible," says Castern. "Therefore, we designed them to be easily converted for use by others. There is nothing specific to Roanoke Valley or even Project Impact about Banks or the interactive CD and they are not copyrighted."

To obtain these or other Roanoke Valley Project Impact resources, visit their Web site at www.projectimpactroanokevalley.org or call Maureen Castern at (540) 345-6579.





Emergency Management

ISC/EOC Interface
August 9-10/Fairfax

Developing Volunteer Resources
August 15-16/Charlottesville

Coordinator's Briefing
September 14/Charlottesville

Effective Communication
September 19-21/Richmond

Reservist Training

Rapid Assessment Workbook Overview
September 14/Richmond

Search and Rescue

SAR 1st Responder
August 12-13/Shenandoah County
September 8-10/Stafford County

Technological Hazards

Hazmat Planning and Management
September 25-27/Va. Beach

Public Safety Response to Terrorism — Tactical Considerations
September 25-27/Va. Beach

Online education made easy

By Dr. Walter Green, University of Richmond

Have you always wanted to get a degree in emergency management but didn't know where to look? Have shift work and emergencies gotten in the way of higher education?

Making the decision to go back to school has just gotten a lot easier. Currently 66 colleges and universities offer certificates, associate and bachelor's degrees and graduate education.

Starting in August, the University of Richmond will offer a 30-semester-hour undergraduate *Certificate in Crisis Management* entirely over the Internet. This program increases access to the university's Emergency Services Management program, which has been educating EM students on campus since 1996.

The courses have been chosen to provide working EMs with new skills and a broad knowledge base that can be applied on a day-to-day basis.

As the certificate offers a choice of 10 among a variety of courses, students can select those classes that will best enhance already completed professional training. Fall offerings include *Introduction to Emergency Services Management*, *Social Dimensions of Disasters* and a research practicum.

The University of Richmond has recently completed an agreement with Thomas Edison State College of New Jersey that allows individuals completing the certificate to apply these courses toward their major for Thomas Edison's degree in Emergency Disaster Management.

The two schools together join Arkansas Tech University and the University of Florida to provide three completely distance-based bachelor's degree programs in emergency management in the U.S.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has consistently supported a view of professionalism defined by professional training, certification and college-level education.

For more information, contact the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond (804) 289-8133 or e-mail wgreen@richmond.edu.



Register online at www.vdem.state.va.us/train/calendar.cfm

Forum (continued from page 1)

- Set realistic expectations (Many hospitals are working under tremendous financial constraints and may not be able to implement these initiatives without outside assistance.)
- Offer resources to help meet expectations

Ennis cites Virginia's hazmat response team as a successful partnership program. "We identified the need for these teams around the state to be equipped, trained and financially supported," he says. "If we expect the same from hospitals, we have to address the issue and be ready to commit resources."

As they plan another forum for 2001, organizers will look at initiatives to provide more training for hospital staff on treating and tracking large numbers of victims. For more information, contact George Roarty at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6574.



10501 Trade Court
Richmond, VA 23236-3713

Address Correction Requested
Return Postage Guaranteed

PRESRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 436
Richmond, VA

UPDATE is a monthly publication of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. For permission to reprint articles in your publication or on the Internet, please call 804/897-6510.

State Coordinator Michael Cline
Executive Editor ... Janet L. Clements
Managing Editor...Barbara B. Bowen

Access the VDEM homepage at:
<http://www.vdem.state.va.us>

© COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA 2000